

Bigger H-Club Might Not Be All Bad

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LITTLE BOYS are frightened by ghosts, grown men by nuclear weapons. So much so, in fact, that, despite the war in Vietnam, the United States and the Soviet Union are moving toward a treaty to prevent the further spread of such weapons.

Presumed self-interest in Washington and Moscow, and in London as the third willing capital, has made the nonproliferation treaty the No. 1 objective in the worldwide policies of each. But is it all that vital? Would it be all that bad if two or four or even a dozen other nations were to join the present five members of the nuclear club?

A respectable body of opinion in the United States gives at least a qualified "no" answer, contending that the dangers have been overstated and the consequences painted in much too dark colors.

A 5-Member Club

WHAT DO the leaders say? President Johnson has commented that achieving a treaty is "the thing that I think we need most to do." Soviet Communist Party Chief Leonid I. Brezhnev has declared that "such a treaty would serve as a definite ob-

stacle on the road to the further growth of the danger of a nuclear war." And British Prime Minister Wilson believes that achieving a treaty is "the most urgent problem facing the world today."

In short, all want to freeze the spread of nuclear weapons. None is prepared to give any of his own to anyone else; all want everyone else to forswear making his own. If the nuclear genie cannot be put back into the bottle, at least, they contend, his magic should be confined to the five existing nuclear club members.

French President de Gaulle, like the Russians, is especially anxious that no West German government have the weapons. And on all sides there is a desire to see that neither India nor Pakistan, neither Israel nor Egypt enters the club, given the antagonisms in those areas of the world.

Looked at from the Washington-Moscow viewpoint, there is a certain stability in the world today because there are only two superpowers. Ergo, any threat to that balance of power—or balance of terror—is per se bad.

But looked at from the outside, specifically from Peking, the effort to maintain that balance is an effort to keep all other nations in a second-class status. Hence the Chinese call the pro-

posed treaty "a monstrous fraud" and they object to what they term "the sinister trafficking" between Washington and Moscow as "part of their monstrous conspiracy against China."

It is widely believed here that just as Nikita Khrushchev agreed to the test ban chiefly to isolate China, so the current Kremlin leaders want the nonproliferation treaty to further that isolation and reinforce their own supremacy as the chief Communist power.

Monopoly to China

SOME RUSSIANS look hopefully to the day when there will be a regime in Peking again friendly with Moscow. In such a case, they visualize a Soviet-Chinese-American nuclear peace in Asia much as there is a Soviet-American nuclear peace in the Atlantic world.

But that day is not in sight. Officially, China's policy, as expressed last year by Foreign Minister Chen Yi, is that "it would be better for a greater number of countries to come into possession of atom bombs." His reasoning is that this would aid China in breaking the nuclear monopoly and nuclear blackmail which Peking sees Moscow and Washington trying to enforce on the world.

However, when it comes to China

helping others, the answer is "no," Chen Yi made clear.

The question is whether a treaty agreed upon by Washington, Moscow and London and not signed, but in effect respected by Paris and Peking would halt the spread. Would it win adherence from potential nuclear powers? And would it be so bad if it did not?

The Soviet-American argument is that the "moral" pressure of such a treaty would bring other signatures. Cost alone, they also argue, is a deterrent to going into the nuclear business even if the science and technology are no longer really secret.

Rand Corp. expert James R. Schlesinger, writing in the Reporter magazine, estimates the cost of developing "a nuclear force that could seriously disturb the two superpowers" at from \$3 billion to \$5 billion annually for a decade or more. An Indian expert recently put an initial \$1 billion price tag on a nuclear missile capability for his country.

Still, as Columbia University's Robert L. Rothstein writes, "costs and liabilities yield to the vision of potential benefits." Small-power deterrents, he says, are "essentially local instruments" whose targets are "neighboring states who either lack completely a nuclear See NUCLEAR, Page E4, Column 3

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capability or have only a very weak one."

This immediately brings to mind India and Pakistan in one case and Israel and Egypt in another. But if Egypt knew for certain that Israel was working on a bomb, would it try a pre-emptive strike with conventional bombs? Or would it await development of its own bomb and missile?

An Unlikely Escalation

THE CHIEF HORROR conjured up by those who fear proliferation is a local war (say, Israel vs. Egypt) involving locally made nuclear weapons. But Schlesinger finds it difficult "to envisage conflicts in third areas escalating into direct nuclear exchanges between the major powers."

If the Soviet Union and the United States adopted parallel courses last year to halt the Indo-Pakistan conventional war, could they not do the same to halt a localized nuclear war?

But what about a small-power attack on a big power being mistaken for a big-power attack? Neville Shute's "On the Beach" visualized world catastrophe springing from an initial Egyptian bomb on the United States which Washington erroneously thought had come from the Soviet Union.

To this, American officials say "non-sense." They contend that modern radar and other devices would instantly tell where any bomb or missile came from—and besides, the Washington-Moscow "hot line" is available for instant consultation.

In short, nuclear weapons proliferated into the hands of additional nations could change the balance of power locally, perhaps even drastically, though at a considerable risk, but they would not affect the major powers or the relationship between the major powers.

15 Years of 'Stability'

ROTHSTEIN ARGUES that for perhaps the next 15 years, "no major technological revolution in weaponry will occur" to upset the larger power balance on which world peace depends. His corollary assumption is that in that period, "the impact of nuclear proliferation will not be extensive enough to drastically transform the conduct of international relations."

Some even argue that additional nuclear powers could add to world stability. For instance, a "Strategy for Peace" conference here last spring came up with the view that Southeast Asia "might be more stable with India and Japan, in possession of nuclear weapons and serving as a local counter-

force to China" than it is with the United States intervening in the area as an outside nuclear power.

No one seems to worry that Britain or France might fire a missile or drop a bomb on the United States or Russia. There would be less serenity, however, in the case of some other potential nuclear powers. But the development of anti-intercontinental ballistic missile (AICBM) systems, on top of air defense systems, by the two superpowers probably makes them invulnerable for some years to come. Indeed, it can be argued that the current deployment of an AICBM system in the Soviet Union totally negates Gen. de Gaulle's nuclear force.

If all this downgrading of small nuclear powers is correct, why should they get into the business? Rothstein is probably correct in saying that widespread proliferation, many states would seek such weapons "in much the same way that Great Britain and France sought them—without a strategy, without a declared enemy in sight, but simply as a form of insurance."

Question of Responsibility

THE ANSWER of those who want a nonproliferation treaty is that while the United States has always been a responsible power in terms of its nuclear weapons, it took years for the So-

viets to reach responsibility and it would take years for new nuclear powers to do so. But are Britain and France irresponsible in the use of their weapons? Or China, despite all its harsh language?

In short, the game of power politics in a proliferated world would still be the same old game with bigger, more dangerous chips. Those who argue that the alarm bells are ringing too loudly are saying that while the new game may be harder on the nerves, it does not necessarily mean that disaster is the end result.

India and other non-nuclear powers have said that the superpowers ought to offer them some guarantees in exchange for a treaty signature. France wants a cutback in delivery systems or some other meaningful arms control measure if it is to sign. Many West Germans would like some political compensation.

As of now, the treaty seems likely to be signed by the United States, the Soviet Union and Britain perhaps early next year, without any more than a verbal gesture in those directions. Then it will be up to the "have not" nations with a capability of becoming nuclear "haves" to decide where their national interests lie. But the world is not going to come to an end if a fifth or sixth nation decides to join the club.



"No need to worry. It'll be at least 15 years before they can start blowing up the world."

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